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Thos Taylor Griffith
1824

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PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
COLCHICUM AUTUMNALE,
AS A
GENERAL REMEDY OF GREAT POWER
IN
DISORDERS WHICH ARE CONNECTED WITH INCREASED ACTION
OF
THE HEART AND ARTERIES;
AND THEREFORE
AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR BLEEDING,
IN THE
TREATMENT OF INFLAMMATORY DISEASES,
BOTH ACUTE AND CHRONIC.

BY
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THIS LITTLE WORK

IS

DEDICATED

TO

THOMAS HADEN, ESQ.

WITH THE MOST

SINCERE FEELING OF GRATITUDE AND RESPECT,

BY HIS

AFFECTIONATE SON,

CHARLES T. HADEN.

62, Sloane Street,

November 15, 1820.

PREFACE.

THE *Colchicum Autumnale* has probably been used in medicine from a very early period, and in modern times at least, it has been celebrated for the cure of gout and rheumatism. In Germany also, it has been used successfully in some cases of dropsy; but never, as far as the writer is acquainted with the subject, in the form of powder, or as a remedy of great efficacy in controuling the action of the heart and arteries, and therefore, as a substitute for the lancet in the treatment of inflammatory diseases, and of those acute and chronic complaints, which are designated diseases of excitement.

In both these particulars, therefore, the writer claims for this pamphlet, the praise of containing something that is new and useful; but he begs to add, that, so far from feeling angry, if it should appear that other practitioners have entertained or published the same views, he will gladly receive such facts as a valuable proof, that the following pages most likely contain truth, instead of being the fruits of an immature deduction from insufficient data.

It has been deemed unnecessary to enter into the history of the *Colchicum Autum-nale*, and of the new discovery, that the efficient part of the plant probably resides in a new alcali; or even to enlarge on the observations made by other practitioners on the subject; as this pamphlet is intended to contain no more than the result of individual experience. As such, it is offered to the fair criticism of the medical public; in the hope that they will not condemn the facts

which it contains, as exaggerated, until they have put them to the test of a cautious trial; and, that they will receive one portion of them, as resulting from the multiplied experience of an old practitioner, not unskilled to judge, and the other, as coming from a younger man indeed, but from one, who would not incur the responsibility of calling for implicit confidence, in a new remedy for the cure of acute and dangerous diseases, unless he had previously convinced himself, by reiterated trials, that he had not gone beyond the fair bounds of legitimate deduction.

Much fault will probably be found with the form of this pamphlet. The writer will be told, that he should not have expressed so much ignorance on the subject he has chosen for elucidation, and that he should have first produced an effect in favour of his remedy, by giving a detail of good cases, before he mentioned those in which it failed;

but he will say in reply, that he does not wish to produce “an effect;” and that, whilst he offers the remedy to the notice of the profession, only because, he thinks, he has been fortunate enough to acquire more information respecting it than is possessed by the generality of practitioners, he feels much more anxious to expose the hidden dangers of the medicine, than to make it's advantages appear too prominent.

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS
ON THE UTILITY OF THE
COLCHICUM AUTUMNALE, &c.

WE are in some degree taking an erroneous view of the practice of medicine, if we are too solicitous about the discovery of new remedies; and this on two accounts. Firstly, because, if our diagnosis of a case be clear, that is, if we have been at the pains to learn for ourselves the exact part which is deranged, and the exact nature of the derangement which so affects that part, the proper treatment will, in most cases, suggest itself immediately: And, secondly, because it is probable that we already possess remedies which are capable of answering almost every indication, if we will only study them accurately, and determine for ourselves the precise action which each of them has on the constitution. Besides, it is useless to search for new means, if this be not done; for if we have not thus examined those medicines which are already in use, we shall probably be equally

negligent with regard to any new one which may be presented to our notice ; and therefore, to supply us with novelty in such a case, is only to pamper uselessly our own idleness.

This principle may be exemplified in another way. I intend in this essay to offer to the profession the *Colchicum Autumnale* as a most powerful means of subduing increased or irregular action, or what we call inflammation in the constitution ; and to shew its powers of lessening the necessity for employing more hurtful remedies, such as bleeding, in acute cases of disease : but in so doing, I know that practitioners who have thought for themselves, will tell me they can do the same thing by other means. When my friend Mr. Alcock publishes his promised work on the mucous membranes, he will shew, that very much more may be done in a similar way by the use of *Ipecacuanha* than is commonly supposed. I have understood that the best of the new school of Italian physicians use antimony and such sedatives as the Prussic Acid, with similar results.* Others employ profuse bleeding, and

* It seems that they quickly reduce the powers of the system by giving strong antimonial emetics in quick succession, and, as they call it, in the dry form ; that is, without assisting their

others purging, to answer the same purpose ; and thus it appears, that we may arrive at nearly the same point by following different paths ; which only proves that as none of these effects are produced by the direct operation of the medicines, study, and study only, will lead a practitioner to the skilful use of any assigned remedy.

The preceding observations have been made, partly because they are believed to be true, and partly to obviate, as far as is possible, the objection that is commonly made to those who propose a new remedy ; but, otherwise, the writer is so fully aware that new remedies are still a great desideratum, that he willingly joins the great authority of Lord Bacon in believing, that at some period or other, some great and signal addition will be made to our means of curing disease.

That we really are in want of new remedies is clear, from the fact, that although we succeed very well in curing moderately violent states of disease, yet deplorable cases but too frequently

operation by drinking warm fluids. I have repeatedly produced the same effect, by giving a quarter of a grain of tartarized antimony every quarter of an hour, gradually increasing the dose until sickness or the required relief follow.

happen, which mock our art, and set our best efforts at defiance. A great part of these difficulties however, may arise, from our ignorance of the true pathology of many important diseases; yet still, though we may know so little respecting the real nature of inflammation and of febrile action, it is equally clear, that, at present, we are not perhaps possessed of any remedy, that acts otherwise than indirectly in the cure of these states of disease.

Our most powerful remedy bleeding stands pre-eminently in this predicament; for, although in some few cases, it appears to be an object to lessen *the quantity* of blood, yet the same thing cannot possibly be supposed to occur in the more common cases for which we bleed; as when we take away in a very short period several pounds of blood for the cure of an acute disease: for we can scarcely do this for the mere purpose of lessening the quantity, when the patient, perhaps, a few hours before, was or appeared to be in perfect health. We bleed in such a case, only because, by thus suddenly lessening the powers of the constitution, we subdue in the quickest way at present known, that ebullition of the system which appears to form such an essential part of inflammatory diseases.

Whatever may be the true pathology of inflammation, however, whether or not it be in its essence an affection of the nerves, or whether or not the capillary arteries be in a state of diminished action from debility and congestion, as Dr. Wilson Philip supposes, it is enough for us to know, that the heart and arteries are thrown into a state of inordinate action, and that our means of cure almost entirely reside in the power which our remedies possess of subduing this inordinate action.

Reasoning in this way, it is fair to infer, that some great remedy for the cure of inflammation will be discovered in that class of agents which we call sedatives. None of the sedatives at present known however, are much celebrated for their power of curing inflammation: digitalis, in some hands, is often very effectual; but, either from some peculiarity of the medicine itself, or from our want of knowledge of the best means of managing it, its powers are depended upon but by very few persons. The prussic acid seems perhaps to possess as much efficacy in this way, as any of the class; but it has hitherto been but little investigated.

We can scarcely class the Colchicum with the sedatives abovementioned; for though its

6 COLCHICUM EXTENSIVELY USED IN THE FORM OF

effects on the constitution be eminently sedative, yet, as it also possesses the power of materially increasing the secretions, it is not yet clear how much of its lowering power depends on these tangible effects, and how much on its direct sedative properties.

Certain it is, however, that in the author's practice it has proved a remedy of eminent power, in controuling the action of the heart and arteries; and in curing those states of the constitution which we are taught to name diseases of excitement, and as such it is offered to the notice of the profession.

In offering these observations on the use of Colchicum I have two duties to perform; the one to give the result of my own experience; the other to do justice to the claims of another. My father, who has practised for nearly forty years in Derby, began the use of Colchicum in gout some years ago; at the time Mr. Want published his first paper on the subject. At this period he gave from a drachm to a drachm and a half of Mr. Want's tincture, without further mixture, in cases of gout; but finding that forty-eight hours frequently elapsed before the purgative operation of the medicine was produced, and as that operation also was often

violent, especially when a repetition of the first dose was required, he began to give the common purging mixture with the Colchicum. Under this mode of exhibition he found the beneficial effects of the Colchicum to follow more quickly, and to be equally decided as when the purging was produced by Colchicum alone. He then extended the use of the remedy from gout to rheumatism, and from the latter to the treatment of cases of inflammation in general; but finding that violent effects sometimes arose from the use of the tincture, he tried the remedy in the form of powder, and as it appeared that it was more manageable in this form, and was, at the same time quite as certain in its operation, he continued to use it almost exclusively, and has now, for more than six years, employed a combination of powdered Colchicum and opening medicine as his common prescription in all diseases of excitement.

From this account, it is apparent, that his experience in the use of Colchicum has been very extensive; and I shall give the general results of that experience nearly in his own words, as his expressions are frequently very strong, and, if verified by other practitioners, are very important.

In the pure inflammations he says, “ If it be given every four hours, until it produce an abundant purgative effect, the pulse will become nearly natural, from being either quick and hard, or slow and full. This frequently happens even before purging has taken place ; and the effect is so certain, that I never bleed, unless inflammation exists to an alarming degree in a vital part, and then never more than once.

“ Fevers and inflammations so removed, never require the use of tonic medicines during convalescence ; the patients indeed generally appear to be as well as though they had not been at all the subject of disease ; and although it sometimes happens that a recurrence of symptoms takes place, it is in a much milder degree, and the new disorder is always immediately removed in a few hours, by a very little of the same treatment.”

The above quotation comprehends nearly the whole of his written sentiments respecting the use of *Colchicum* in acute diseases ; but I have frequently heard him express, in conversation, the results of his practice in individual disorders ; and refer to cases of violent acute disease of almost every kind, in which the symptoms gave way in the most rapid manner ; cases

where, from his having been called in early, a disease which would not, under the usual treatment by bleeding and purging, have been cured in less than a week or a fortnight, and would have then left the patient in a state of weakness, has been removed by the use of Colchicum in two days, and the patient left really in a state of health

Amongst these he has mentioned rheumatic inflammatory fevers, inflammations of the lungs or membranes, catarrhs and influenza; but, perhaps especially, such cases of fever attending the puerperal state as he calls puerperal fever. In these last cases, I heard him say this morning (September 17th, 1820), that the Colchicum acted like magic.

It is unfortunate that no record remain of these cases; but, amongst others of very recent date, he related the circumstances of two, which as the first exemplifies the most favorable mode of the action of Colchicum in acute cases, when given early in the disease, and the second its action in similar cases where the disease is more advanced, I shall give them; especially as a reference to the book, in which the medicines were ordered, has convinced me, that the details do not materially differ from the true circumstances of each case.

Case of Acute Rheumatism.

A stout athletic labourer was suddenly seized by rigor, after working several hours in the River Derwent. Violent fever followed; and on the next day, he was confined to his bed, being incapable of moving his limbs in the slightest degree. Five grains of the powdered Colchicum with a scruple of the sulphat of potash, were given four times in the day; and on the day but one after, he was met walking in the street, and was very soon quite well. Five doses of the medicine were taken.

Case of Bronchial Inflammation, in which the disease had continued for several days, and was complicated with pleurisy.

A lady, 60 years of age, light complexioned, and of rather delicate health, was visited for urgent symptoms of inflammation of the cavity of the chest, which had existed, in a less acute form, for more than a fortnight.

She was at that time, however, laboring under symptoms of fever, attended by restlessness, a very hot skin, a strong full pulse of 90 in the minute, great difficulty of breathing, pain in the side, an incessant cough, and a copious expectoration of tenacious mucus, which was so equally tinged by blood, as to

have acquired a regular mahogany colour, and to appear, as my father expressed it, as if the blood had exuded from the vessels of the inflamed membrane, at the instant of the mucus being secreted by them.

These symptoms were so urgent that she earnestly requested to be bled. The Colchicum however was given in the dose of three grains four times a day, with a scruple of the sulphat of pot-ash. On the second day the symptoms were still urgent; but on the third, copious purging took place, and the most material relief followed: indeed except that the expectoration and cough continued, the symptoms had nearly subsided. The form of the disease was thus entirely broken, but as the cough was teasing, one sixth of a grain of emetic tartar, and the same quantity of opium was given, with ten grains of chalk, four times in the day, instead of the Colchicum. Fourth day: some increase of symptoms was present, and the pain in the side more urgent; five grains of calomel and six of Colchicum were therefore given in pills at bedtime, and the powders were repeated. Fifth day: the breathing was relieved, and the expectoration was much easier; but, as pain still continued in the side, a blister was applied, and

12 USE IN CHRONIC AND SUB-ACUTE INFLAMMATION.

the powders were repeated. Sixth day : some return of the symptoms required a repetition of the calomel and colchicum. Seventh day : savin ointment was ordered for the blister. On this day the spitting was recollected to be quite colourless. Eighth day : the pain was gone, and the patient craved much for food. Tenth day : she had no complaint, except an asthmatic kind of breathing, for which pills of emetic tartar, gum ammoniac and myrrh were ordered ; under the use of which, she gradually recovered, except that, for some time she was unable to take stimulating food without quickening her pulse, increasing her asthmatic symptoms and inducing a more copious expectoration of transparent jelly-like fluid.

With regard to chronic and less acute complaints, my father says, in his written communication—"In organic derangements of structure, when occasionally attended by inflammatory symptoms, the above treatment answers perfectly in curing the super-induced inflammation ; so much so, that at times the general actions are so much subdued as to give no notice, by symptoms, of the existence of the primary disease ; thus, in one case, gangrene was going on in the foot, whilst the

inflammation, which produced it, was subsiding under the use of Colchicum. In chronic rheumatism, six grains, with one drachm of sulphat of pot-ash, taken every morning, will, I believe, always answer. In some cases, however, many weeks elapse, before the patient is well; although, when patients have persevered, I have not known it to fail. In habitual discharges of blood from plethora, when under the ordinary treatment, frequent bleedings were required, the daily use of Colchicum (as above) has answered very well indeed, as far as I have been able to try it. It has great influence in consumptions, but it does not remove the complaint. After accidents, its effects are sometimes extraordinary, if immediately given; it seems to have the power of averting the severe consequences which usually follow such cases."

Some general observations follow on the management of the medicine which we shall transcribe. "In all acute cases, great attention is required, to ascertain the proper dose. If relief be not apparent in twelve or fifteen hours, the dose must be increased, and calomel or the black dose be given in addition, so as to bring on the purging sooner.

It is necessary to continue the Colchicum

14 A LONG CASE RARELY HAPPENS UNDER ITS USE.

for some time after the purging has been produced, if the least disposition to inflammation, or the inflammatory diathesis, remain.

Its effects are so certain that a long case with me is quite a rarity and only occurs when the patient is not seen early in the disease; and seldom then."

This last sentence is further verified by a remark which we have heard him make, and in which our experience fully agrees; that the medical practitioner is frequently robbed of his fair meed of praise by the use of Colchicum in acute complaints; for the disease is often so speedily cured, that the patient is not aware that he has laboured under an illness, which would in the ordinary course of things have required active depletion for many weeks, and the ultimate result of which might have been, for some time doubtful.

I shall be excused, (for how many men treat their horses better than themselves) if I insert here a case, which is interesting, because it shows the peculiar mode of operation of this medicine, as well as those above related, and that it is applicable to the acute diseases of horses as well as to those of the human subject. It shows also, the deleterious effects of the remedy when given in an over dose.

Case of Inflammatory Fever in a Horse.

In August 1820, a horse of my father's went a journey of 500 miles. He was occasionally unwell at the latter part of the journey, but was not laid up, until he had been ailing for a week in the early part of September. At this time his breathing was considerably affected, and rattled; also, if he drank cold water, he was affected by shivering. The skin after this became hot, and the nostrils very red and much inflamed; but his ears, shewed that the skin was occasionally cold as well as hot. He had a hard, but not a frequent cough. Warm mashies were given to him, but no medicine. His legs and joints generally became stiff and very much swelled, and his difficulty of breathing increased, until it appeared necessary to take away three quarts of blood. This evacuation afforded him much relief, and the blood was singularly inflamed; above one half of the quantity consisted of the buffy coat, and there was no separable serum. Colchicum was now given to him in the dose of two drachms every six hours with an ounce of salts.

On the next day, September 15, more attention was paid to the horse's symptoms. His joints were still as much swelled and as stiff as

before, his skin though not so hot, was still hotter than is natural, and his breathing was still unnatural. If the Colchicum had not been given he would have been then bled again, but we agreed to defer bleeding him till next morning, and the medicine alone was continued. On the 16th purging began to take place, and his symptoms were nearly gone; his joints had almost acquired their natural size, the skin was cool, and the horse was more lively. His pulse was now much more perceptible than on the 15th, and beat forty-two times in each minute. The Colchicum was discontinued, but in the course of the day it was found that the dose of the medicine had been too large; for he was much purged and apparently greatly exhausted, he had occasional severe attacks of pain in his bowels, and was so ill, as greatly to alarm the servant for his present safety. Laudanum $\mathfrak{zss}$. and compound tincture of gentian $\mathfrak{zij}$. were given, and on the next day he was perfectly in a state of convalescence; the excitement having entirely subsided, and the swelling of his joints being completely removed.

In this case, the good effect of the Colchicum was as decided, as in similar cases in the human subject. The dose however was too

large, and perhaps an error was committed in not adding spice to it ; for it seems that spice is always added to opening medicine, when given to horses, on account of their being liable to suffer, and even to die, from attacks of colic. He took six doses of the medicine.

It only remains to show my father's mode of prescribing Colchicum.

In acute cases, he gives from two to eight grains of the powder, with a scruple or more of sulphat of pot-ash, in rose mixture, every four or six hours, increasing the dose after a few hours, until either purging is produced on the second day or third day, or the common black dose, or calomel, is given in addition. The medicine is now laid aside, if its effect on the disease be decided, or it is given in diminished doses, or one dose of six or more grains is given occasionally, with calomel at night.

In chronic cases, one considerable dose of five grains and upwards is given every morning early, with a drachm of sulphat of pot-ash, in a tumbler nearly full of warm water. In this form, it is continued for weeks together, other opening medicines, such as jalap, being added to it, as occasion may require.

I shall now add to the above statement, an

18 COLCHICUM OFTEN, UNEXPECTEDLY, MAKES
BLEEDING UNNECESSARY.

account of the use of Colchicum in my own practice.

I have used it extensively for the last three years, and principally in conjunction with sulphat of pot-ash, as recommended by my father. On the whole, the result of my experience does not vary from that of his ; I find it to be a most material auxiliary to the lancet in inflammatory diseases, even in the very acute cases, whilst in the usual forms of inflammatory fevers, it supercedes its use in almost all cases. In pneumonia, for instance, the following circumstance has repeatedly happened. Cases have occurred, in which it has been thought prudent to recommend bleeding at the first visit ; but where the patient has requested to postpone the operation till the next day, by which time so much relief has been obtained, that the bleeding has been totally unnecessary : one of these patients I recollect was a lady far advanced in pregnancy ; and to her, the result was peculiarly gratifying. The same observation may be made with regard to almost all the other forms of acute diseases. It is necessary to say, however, that I have not been so decidedly successful in my employment of Colchicum as my father has been ;

but I know that part of that has arisen from my not understanding its use so well as he does.* In many cases it has been unsuccessful; and I have not yet been able to discriminate those forms of disease in which it succeeds, from those in which it fails. Two cases of pneumonia occurred on the same day, and they appeared to be of an equally acute character. One of them was relieved in twenty-four hours and was soon well; the other required bleeding on the second day, and the Colchicum did not succeed until considerable depletion by the lancet had been premised.† Even in acute rheumatism a previous bleeding is often required. In one case of a stout female servant, after calomel and antimony had been prescribed,

* Increased attention to the powers of the remedy since the early part of this essay was written, as also an opportunity of learning the peculiarities of my father's practice from his own mouth, have produced cases which will be detailed below, and which perhaps equal the best of those which he refers to; and indeed they are such as would lead me to say, that my knowledge of the extent to which the beneficial effect of Colchicum may be carried is still very limited.

† With respect to this unsuccessful case, I think I dare now state, that had I materially increased the dose of Colchicum instead of bleeding, the disease would have been sooner cured, than it was by the lancet, and the smaller doses of Colchicum conjoined.

ten grains of the powder, repeated four times in the day, with enough opening medicine to secure a full action of the bowels, did not relieve the symptoms ; so that on the fifth day, a full bleeding was required. After that, the Colchicum acted most decidedly ;* and in one respect very peculiarly, as it illustrated an observation made by my father, that it sometimes masks the existence of local inflammation. The patient appeared to be in a state of almost perfect health. Her pulse was under seventy, and natural, the pain was entirely gone, her skin was perhaps cooler than in health, and her constitution appeared to be even in a state of languor and debility. But *as her tongue was not clean*, the use of invigorating diet and medicine was refrained from for more than a week ; when her inclinations were indulged by allowing animal broth, and giving half a scruple of cinchona twice a day with Colchicum. Her pain returned almost immediately ; and then a repetition of the Colchicum and the inducing of decided purging, cured all the symptoms and cleaned the tongue ; after which, the patient was *really* well. This was one of the cases

* The last note is perhaps equally applicable to this case as to the one above, or rather, I should now say, that too much opening medicine was given with the Colchicum.

which confirmed me in my dependance on the state of the tongue as an index of the progress and form of diseases. It very seldom happens that the appearance of the tongue is deceitful, and I have long been intent on making accurate observations on the state of the tongue in diseases of the different structures of the body ; in the hope of tracing that primitive appearance of its surface, which, it is evident, belongs to each of the simple uncombined inflammations and irritations of the various tissues.

In the fevers of children, in which Colchicum generally succeeds, opening medicine is often an indispensable requisite in the prescription. To one little girl, Colchicum was given for several days, and even with enough sulphat of pot-ash to act fairly on the bowels, but the feverish symptoms only remitted, they did not entirely go away ; whilst on the exhibition of a decided purgative, a load of fæces was discharged, and the patient was almost immediately afterwards well.

In many cases of acute rheumatism, and the same observation may be said of all other diseases, it has seemed as if great attention to other means of cure, as well as Colchicum and purg-

ing, has tended materially to hasten the termination of the complaint.

Two Cases of Lumbago.

Two patients, of about the same age, lay in their beds unable to stir from lumbago. One of them, a gentleman, in addition to taking Colchicum, paid attention to the usual general requisites of good treatment, drank plentifully of warm fluids, and eat nothing, went into the warm bath twice a day, and kept himself covered by the bed-clothes. He was consequently quite free from pain in twenty-four hours, and was up and well in four days; whilst the other, a lady, although she lay in bed, and her disease left her perfectly well in a week, yet she did not use the warm bath, nor did she drink plentifully of warm fluids, nor was she attentive to keeping her skin in a damp state, and her pains only gradually receded. In neither of these patients was the use of tonics required; although in the previous acute attacks from which the lady had suffered, she had always lost much blood, and her convalescence was extremely slow.

The following is the written report of the last case as made at the time.

Case of Lumbago treated by Colchicum.

Mrs. B. aged 40, thin, and liable to inflammatory complaint, was gradually attacked by lumbago, so that in three or four days, on August 12th, 1819, she was unable to move in her bed. She was not then particularly hot, but her pulse was 100, and hard.

She took of powdered colchicum gr. vij. and of sulphat of potash ʒi. every five hours.

2d. day—Was somewhat better; the pain being still nearly as bad as before. Add a drachm of sulphat of magnesia to each draught, as the medicine has not acted on the bowels: also take of calomel gr. iij. and of antimonial powder gr. vi. at bed-time.

3d. day—Had been purged and sweated much in the night, and was much easier; but the pain had remitted before the purging or sweating occurred. Continue.

4th day—Still better. Continue.

5th day—Was quite easy, but had been sick; had passed several dark and bilious stools, and felt exceedingly low and uncomfortable. Take volatile saline draught.

6th day—Still depressed, but up and free from pain. Was very weak. Take no medicine.

24 CASE OF ACUTE RHEUMATISM, INSTRUCTIVE FROM

7th day—Much better, but still weak.

8th day—The patient was nearly in her usual health.

The following case is given here as it was, in some degree, a failure in the administration of the medicine, and is otherwise very instructive. The notes are copied as they were made at the time. The case is hinted at for another purpose in page 19.

Case of Acute Rheumatism.

Mr. S——'s servant Jane, aged 40, was attacked by acute rheumatism on Monday, July 12, 1819.

2d day—Was lying in bed unable to move either of her legs; both of them being swelled, and red in patches over the joints. Gave calomel and opium at night, followed by salts and senna on the day after.

3d day—No better. Gave of powdered colchicum gr. x. of sulphat of potash $\mathfrak{z}$ i. and of carbonate of potash $\mathfrak{z}$ i. once every six hours.

5th day—The powders purged, but did not produce much relief. Prescribed them without the sal polychrest.

6th day—Much as before.

9th day—Had not taken the powders regu-

larly on account of their still purging violently. To-day, the pain and swelling left the legs and fell on the arms. V. S. ad. $\frac{3}{4}$ xvi.; ordered of colchicum gr. x. of Dover's powder gr. iij. and of calomel gr. iſs. three times a day.

10th day—Much better; pain less, but the wrists and hands are still swelled and inflamed. Continue the powders.

15th day—For three days has had neither pain nor fever; the swellings are gone, the skin is cool, and the pulse is 64, and soft. Complaints only of weakness. Has had four motions since yesterday. R. colchici gr. vi. calom. gr. i. pulv. Dover's gr. iij. pulv. cinchonæ $\mathfrak{D}$ ss, ft. pulv. ter die sumend. Let her have broth.

17th day—Was hotter, and had had more pain. Let her take the powders as prescribed on the 9th day. From this time she slowly recovered.

In this case the Colchicum was at first trusted to improperly. It was insufficient to subdue the inflammation until V. S. was employed; when it answered every purpose, and the patient was, before the bark was given, quite well; except that the tongue was furred. This furred tongue was improperly slighted; only, however, because it seemed to be unsupported by any

26 CASE OF ACUTE RHEUMATISM, IN WHICH PRUSSIC

other symptom of the smallest importance. Nothing can show the controuling effect of Colchicum so strongly as this. With what other medicine would the constitution have appeared so quiet under the circumstance of such a tongue? Omitting the bark speedily cured the patient.

The following case describes also a failure in the use of Colchicum; but, perhaps neither that case, nor the one before it, would have run the same course, had they occurred within the last few months. The Prussic Acid appeared to be of signal service in the last case.

Case of Acute Rheumatism. Action of Colchicum and Prussic Acid.

September 18, 1819, Mr. Walton, aged 26, applied. Disease, Acute Rheumatism of the congestive character. V. S. and Colchicum in the ordinary dose, every six hours.

26th—Had taken the powders with tolerable regularity. After the bleeding, the excitement was fully developed; but the Colchicum so masked the symptoms, as to prevent a repetition of the bleeding, which would have been of advantage, as it now appears. He was relieved, however, in some degree, especially when the

medicine brought away, which it did daily, in large quantities, much very foul, dark, lumpy fæces ; but still his heat and perspiration were very great occasionally.

27th—The pain, after attacking on the preceding days, various of the joints, shifted to the chest, especially on the right side : he was also in much general pain, and passed sleepless nights. Emp. Lyttæ. calom. gr. i. opii. gr. $\frac{1}{4}$, pulv. antim. gr. ij. 6^{vis} horis.

28th—Was easier, and slept much better. Difficulty of breathing and pain gone.

29th, 30th, Oct. 1st. & 2d—Continued the medicine ; but, for two days, in half the quantity, from his mouth being sore. On this day he was very ill ; in constant pain, very hot and covered with perspiration. He could not move, and had not slept for two nights. R acid. prussic. gutt. x. aquæ distillat. ℥vi. cap. coch. larg. 2^{dis} horis.

3d—Had slept five hours during the night ; was very easy, could walk, and said he was getting quite strong ; but the pain in the chest had returned on the left side, and it became worse in the evening. Emp. Lyttæ. Had taken nearly all the mixture. Continue.

This man got a letter for St. George's Hos-

pital, but was only made an out-patient, the house being full. In a fortnight, going out into the air had increased his complaints, until he was almost as bad as ever; skin hot, great pain, much restlessness, much cough, and a feeling as if he was consumptive. Resumed his prussic acid. Next day was much better. Continued.

Oct. 21—Was quite well. Had got gradually better since last report.

Fatal Case of Bronchitis.

An old man died yesterday whilst taking Colchicum; but, in his case, it had frequently saved him from death on other occasions, and it even alleviated in some degree his last fatal attack. He was a puffy old man, who had not lain down in his bed for ten years, on account of an asthmatic affection. He frequently suffered from inflammatory attacks, and on the present occasion, he had been ill a week; a considerable loss of very buffy blood retarded his death in the first instance, but his lips became livid, the expectoration became abundant, and difficult of expulsion, and he died with his bronchia filled with mucus. In such a case, of course, it could not be expected that Colchicum

should save life ; and it will probably fail in the same way, in those very acute inflammations, which destroy life so rapidly, even when bleeding is pushed to extremity.

It appears to disagree with some constitutions ; but I have not myself met with such examples. My father however mentions a few patients, in whom languor and sickness are immediately produced ; and another of my friends reports, that he has been requested by one or two of his patients to leave off “ that very unpleasant medicine.”

I shall now relate a few examples of its beneficial operation in acute disorders.

Case of Pneumonia in a Child.

A child had been two days ill of pneumonia. Colchicum was exhibited instead of the lancet, and on the third day his recovery was so perfect, that an eminent physician, who was visiting another patient in the house, on being asked, said that the child had no disease, and was much surprised to learn the true state of the case.

*Case of Febrile Excitement occurring in
Pregnancy.*

A lady had been bled without much relief for that state of feverish restlessness which oftens affects persons during the latter months of pregnancy. Perfect relief followed the use of Colchicum in the ordinary dose and form, after three days' exhibition ; and as she more than once reproduced the same symptoms, by taking more food than was proper, it acted in each case as beneficially as on the first occasion. Indeed, it seems to be peculiarly adapted for the relief of this very common state, in which pregnant women are found ; and too much care cannot be taken to remove such symptoms ; for observant practitioners have found fatal cases of puerperal fever after delivery, to be connected with their previous existence.*

* The recollection of one very gratifying case of this kind occurs. A lady, whose particular friend had died from a deplorable attack of puerperal fever, in spite of the very best treatment, fell into this state of febrile excitement ; and as it was recollected that her friend had been similarly affected before her confinement, she felt certain that she herself should also die of puerperal fever after delivery. Her skin was very hot and flushed, her pulse was strong and hard, and she was so restless as well as hot during the night, that she generally walked about the greater part of the night, and of course got but very little sleep.

Case of Inflamed Breasts and Nipples.

In another case, connected with the state of parturition, the efficacy of Colchicum was very agreeably marked. A lady was unable to suckle her first child on account of her nipples being so exceedingly tender. Abscess occurred in one breast, and many months elapsed before she recovered her health. On the fourth day after the birth of her second child, the same symptoms were present. It was torture to let the child touch her; her skin was hot and her pulse strong; the nipples projected, they were covered by fluid secretion, and were of a dark brown-red colour, and the breasts were loaded by milk. She had been amply purged. Bleeding was first adopted, and then the Colchicum was prescribed, to be taken four times a day, with opening medicine. On the third day, the patient's constitution was in a state of perfect tranquillity; the pain was no longer present; the child sucked very well through a shield; the breasts were moderately distended, and the nipples were very remarkably altered in their appearance. The swelling, the red-

Bleeding, and afterwards abstinence and daily laxatives, continued for about three weeks, dissipated all the symptoms, and she soon after passed through her confinement with very little pain and without illness.

ness, and the fluid secretion were gone, the nipples were scarcely able to support their own weight, and were entirely free from any angry appearance.

The treatment of this case commenced on September 11th, 1820, and it is but right to say that I had never seen inflammation of the nipples yield to any treatment so perfectly, where the child continued to suck, as in this instance.

The lady continued well until October 8th, when she again applied on account of a recurrence of the symptoms. Calomel and saline medicines were prescribed; but on the second day she was much worse, both as to her symptoms of general fever, and the inflamed state of her breasts and nipples. She was much alarmed; for she was certain from her sensations, that the breast would again gather; especially, as that breast in particular, was very hard, and discharged blood only instead of milk, when it was drawn; which operation was not performed but with excruciating pain.

The same dose of Colchicum and of sulphat of pot-ash was now given four times a day, the bleeding was not repeated, and a cold lotion was applied to the breast.

3d day—She was better in health; but the breast was red externally, as if suppuration would take place. This produced some regret that the bleeding had not been premised, as in the first instance. The patient was much purged by the medicine, as on the former occasion.

4th day—She was nearly well; the nipples were perfectly free from pain; both the breasts were quite soft; her fever was gone; and, as she now gave up suckling, one of the draughts taken daily, for four days, left her quite well.*

Case of Acute Rheumatism.

In a gentleman, who was lying in bed, nearly unable to stir, from acute rheumatism, with a strong pulse, a very hot skin, and his face covered by an oily perspiration, the complaint was so entirely removed on the third day, that the patient was up, and did not require the further use of medicine.

My brother, who is surgeon to the Derbyshire General Infirmary, furnishes me with the following case:—

* This case goes far to teach us that our practice in inflammation of the nipples would be more successful, if we treated it more as if it were connected with a constitutional cause.

34 CASE OF ACUTE RHEUMATISM, RAPIDLY CURED.

Case of Acute Rheumatism, in which a more rapid cure took place than is usual.

Mrs. Hudson, an emaciated old woman, who had suffered much from being reduced in her circumstances, became ill from a severe attack of rheumatic fever.

She was treated improperly for three weeks; the fever having been so violent, during that time, as to reduce her apparently to the last extremity.

She was seen, for the first time, under these circumstances; and it was found, in addition, that she was unable to move herself from the position in which she lay: that her pulse was quick and feeble, her fever violent, and that she screamed out at every attempt at motion. One drachm and a half of the Tincture of Colchicum was given at bed-time, with infusion of roses.

On calling, the next day, my brother says, "I was told she was coming down stairs; and she really did hobble down, a mere ghost; but she was free from pain, her pulse was ninety, and she complained of nothing but extreme debility."

"On further enquiry, she told me, that the draught seemed to warm her stomach, and that she speedily fell asleep, and slept till morning."

“At that time the medicine had neither purged her, nor produced sickness, nor indeed any other sensible effect on the secretions; but some purging occurred in the evening, and she took no other medicine, but in a few days was following her employment of selling milk from door to door.”

My brother said also, that he had seen the same rapid cure take place in cases of gout.

For a reason which is mentioned afterwards, I have not hitherto trusted to the single use of Colchicum, in what we call Idiopathic fevers: but in the following case, it cured the complaint, and acted the part of an opiate, after calomel and common purging medicine only gradually and imperfectly relieved the symptoms. The Colchicum, however, was pushed rather too far.

Case of Simple Fever treated by Colchicum.

Mr. Coates, aged 35, and weak, applied, with symptoms of common fever, on Sept. 28, 1819. Had had it for some days. The excitement was not fully developed, and the chief symptom was head-ache, which was rather severe.—Ordered calomel and antimony, followed by black dose. Tongue was covered with

36 COLCHICUM IN SUB-ACUTE AND CHRONIC COMPLAINTS.

a dull, dirty, brownish-grey, but smooth, slimy coat.—29. Was somewhat easier; had been purged.—Rep. pil. et haust.—30. Head not much better, tongue beginning to clean at the edges: had been purged.—Colchicum et sal polychrest. ter die. October 1. Much better; was tranquillized in a very remarkable manner. Tongue much cleaner at the edges; great sweating produced; had been purged. Continue.—2d. Still better. Continue.—3d. Not quite so well, the medicine beginning to disagree; it had created sickness and general uncomfortable feelings. Sweating and purging continued; stool dark, and in pieces; tongue with a small quantity of the dirty appearance in the centre, but the clean edges becoming covered with a thin white scurf, certainly from irritation on account of the over-dose of Colchicum.

This patient, from this time, required small doses of opening medicine for some days; when he was able to resume his common occupations.

The use of Colchicum in Sub-acute and Chronic Complaints.

In sub-acute and chronic cases, very many instances of it's remarkably beneficial operation occur to my recollection.

Case of Porrigo Favosa.

A very unhealthy child, of six months old, had been, from birth, in frequent hazard of dying in consequence of an irritability of constitution, which was connected with a very diseased state of scalp, from porrigo favosa. This child was under very skilful management, but no plan appeared to relieve the irritated state of his habit. Fever was constantly present; an acrid secretion poured from the surface of the scalp, and symptoms of cerebral irritation occasionally ran so high as to threaten attacks of inflammation of the brain. Local applications, as well as general remedies, were also tried in very great variety. It was at last requested that the Colchicum might be given; and the relief was so remarkable, that the attendant practitioner expressed his surprise in strong terms. I am unacquainted with the ultimate result of the case.

On the same principle, the cutaneous diseases, which so abound amongst the patients who apply for relief at the Chelsea and Brompton Dispensary, are more benefited by the use of Colchicum than by any other remedy. In many cases, the angry appearance of the skin subsides, the pustular or scaly eruptions cease

to discharge, and are thus speedily healed, either with or without the assistance of local applications.

It is not, however, equally successful in the dry form of psoriasis. It succeeds in some ; but in others, where the constitution seems to take but little part in the disease, it has apparently but little effect.

Case of Psoriasis.

In one case of moist psoriasis, which was cured by purging and low diet, an obstinate state of feverish irritation remained, which was not at all relieved by severe purging and collateral modes of treatment. It entirely subsided after three days' use of Colchicum.

In the treatment of ulcers, many cases have occurred, in which, a most material alteration has been made in the appearance of the sore during the first week, by checking the irritable state of the part and of the constitution, by the exhibition of Colchicum.

Local phlegmons also, erysipelas, ophthalmia, and such inflamed states of particular parts, as are kept up, or are accompanied by an excited state of the system, are in an equal degree benefited by the same remedy.

After having related so many, and such decisive cases as the above, it is perhaps unnecessary to give more instances of the good or bad effects of Colchicum in the treatment of disease: but, as the author is anxious, on the one hand, to avoid misleading his readers, by relating only picked cases, and thus giving an erroneous account of the real facts of the case; and on the other hand, to save himself from suspicion of having given a false colouring to his statements, by resorting only to extraordinary instances of success; he has given below a short account of every case in which he prescribed Colchicum, during a certain period; and, to make that period the more unexceptionable, he has chosen the time between October 10th, 1820, the day on which he returned to London, after a month's absence, and the present day, October 26th; and he will give the whole in the form of a diary, accounting for each case as he goes on.

October 10th.

Mrs. L.—Case of inflamed breasts and inflamed nipples. This case is related above, in page 31.

Miss T.—Case of acute bronchitis, supposed to be consumption. As this case is one of the

most satisfactory illustrations of the efficacy of Colchicum, in similar diseases, it shall be given in detail, as taken at the time.

Case of Bronchitis and threatened Phthisis treated by Colchicum.

Miss T., aged 12, had suffered from a hard, teasing cough for many weeks, when it increased considerably; great irritation of the larynx, and considerable fever came on. These symptoms were not treated very decidedly, so that at the end of a fortnight, on October 10th, 1820, her pulse was found to have risen to 130 in the minute, and was hard; her cough was dry and constant; she could not fill her chest with air, her skin was very hot, and her face was flushed.

Under these circumstances, as she had from childhood been of a weakly habit, and was troubled by enlarged glands in the neck, her case was considered to be very dangerous; inasmuch as it was feared, that phthisis had already made considerable advances in her constitution. Four grains of Colchicum powder, and two scruples of sulphat of potash, were given four times in the twenty-four hours, and the assistance of a physician was requested. On the next day and the

day following, no material change took place. The medicine, however, by favor of the physician, was continued; and as the bowels had not been moved, three grains of calomel and two of aloes were given, in addition, at bedtime. It may be necessary here, to state, that the disease might have hitherto been in some degree kept up, by the patient having indulged her appetite more largely with the vegetable food that was allowed than was proper.

On the 4th day, a great change had taken place; the bowels had acted copiously, and all the symptoms were relieved; so that on the 5th day her pulse was reduced to 80, and on the 6th, to 72 beats in a minute;—the bowels having acted fully every day. She had been in bed for the four preceding days, but was now permitted to sit up for a few hours in the afternoon; only half the quantity of Colchicum was now given, and in two days after, it was left off altogether.

October 26.—This young lady has continued to improve. Her tongue is quite clean, and has been so, since the full operation of the Colchicum; her cough is very nearly gone, and she feels quite well; but on account of the delicacy of her constitution, and the other cir-

cumstances of the case, it is determined that she shall keep wholly in a warm atmosphere during the next winter.

It is right to state, that the physician's fears of consumption being far advanced, were, in the first instance, equally strong with those of the writer, or perhaps stronger.

Mrs. E., aged 30, was suffering from a common catarrh. She took six five-grain doses, and a small quantity of common opening medicine, in the morning, for a few days; after which, she took a bitter opening draught daily, on account of an old stomach affection, but was otherwise well.

October 11th.

Mrs. L., aged 55, a corpulent person, who had suffered for some time from a slight degree of general feverishness, attended by heat at the stomach, and an itching eruption on the skin, similar to urticaria. A slight mercurial, with ipecacuanha, was ordered for bed-time, and five grains of Colchicum, with a drachm of sulphat of potash, in warm water, for the morning. A restricted diet was also recommended.

26th.—She has continued to take the medicine, and is now nearly well.

October 12th.

Mr. P.—An old case of deranged digestive organs, with a white, furred tongue, some heat of the skin, and considerable itching when warm in bed. Seven grains, with sal polychrest, were ordered to be taken every morning. October 26. He was better, but far from recovered: he had, however, not taken his medicine very regularly.

Mrs. B., aged 45, had been under the care of various medical men, for a general feverish state of the constitution as marked by white and dry tongue, hot skin, constant pain of the head and limbs, and very deranged alvine secretions. She had first been prescribed for by the Author, three months before, when the daily use of Colchicum, as in other sub-acute cases, continued for some weeks, had more effect in removing the symptoms, than had resulted from any previous mode of treatment. She had now, Oct. 12th, some increase of her complaint, and has since then continued to take the medicine, with the same effect as before. As an index to the state of her habit, it may be said that she had been burnt formerly on the shoulder, by an unskilful cupper;

and the part had from that time existed in the form of a large, red, injected wheal, which was very painful. The size and inflamed state of this part, was also much reduced by the use of Colchicum; after which pressure was applied with success.

October 13.

Mrs. S.—As this case and the next but one appear to illustrate the difference of action between the tincture and the powder of Colchicum, the notes made at the time shall be transcribed. It was quite evident that although the medicine in some degree mitigated the disorder, it produced it's unpleasant symptoms, and was therefore obliged to be discontinued before it had materially lessened the signs of inflammation.

*Case of Bronchitis in a Pregnant Lady treated by
Tincture of Colchicum.*

October 13, 1820.

Mrs. S., aged 35, applied, with all the symptoms of bronchitis. Her cough was exceedingly troublesome, and her breathing very difficult; she was in the seventh month of pregnancy.

Tinct. Colchic. ʒ ss.

Magn. Sulph. ʒ i

Pulv. Ipecac. gr. ss. and

Aquæ ʒ x

were given, four times in the day; and two grains of calomel, with five of Dover's powder, at bed-time, to still the cough, which was much complained of.

2d day. The symptoms were much the same; but the opium had produced much head-ache.

3d day. The symptoms of inflammation were very much reduced, she having been much purged; but exceedingly disagreeable symptoms of languor, sickness, and debility, were present; seven doses of the medicine having been taken. A volatile saline draught was given every five hours, but the sickness was not relieved until the next day, when she felt better in all respects, except that the cough was still troublesome. In the evening of this fourth day, the oppressed breathing was again present, and the cough was violent.

One Colchicum draught was ordered for bed-time, and an opening draught for the morning.

5th day. Not better. A Colchicum draught was now ordered, every night and morning.

46 CASE OF OPPRESSED POWERS FROM PLETHORA.

6th day. Somewhat better, but not materially. Continue.

7th day. She got up with the same symptoms of sickness, &c., which lasted all day, even though she had only taken three draughts within the last two days. She was now desired to take but one daily, and to continue it; but she refused to go on with them, and a grain and a half of Ipecac. was ordered four times a day instead. The Colchicum had purged her rather strongly every day.

October 24. The patient had taken one Colchicum draught daily, as desired, and had been purged; she was also somewhat better, but not much. Was desired to take the Ipecac. as directed. 26th. Was much better, and inclined greatly to prefer the new medicine. It was therefore directed to be continued.

October 16.

Mr. E., aged 23, complained of being so inclined to sleep, whenever he sat down, that he could not read for a quarter of an hour together. Twelve powders were given to him, with directions to take one, in half a pint of water, every morning early. 26th. The symptoms were reported to have subsided.

October 17.

Mr. W.'s servant, aged 20, was suffering much from inflammation of the bursa, which is above the cap of the knee. The constitution was materially affected by fever, and the part was very red. She had previously been bled by leeches, and had been purged. The tincture of *Colchicum* draught, as above prescribed in Mrs. S.'s case, was given ; she was desired to lie in bed, the leeches were re-applied, and low diet was enjoined. After taking six doses of the medicine, her knee was better, but she had, for some of the last hours, thrown up all her food with much of a very tenacious, slimy matter ; her pulse was quick, her tongue foul, her skin covered by an unpleasant perspiration, and she was altogether very uncomfortable.

These symptoms did not subside entirely, until after a lapse of three or four days.

On the 22d, she was permitted to get up, as her knee seemed to be well : but on the 25th, all her first symptoms had returned ; her knee was inflamed and very painful, and her constitution laboured under considerable fever. Five grains of calomel were given at bed-time, with seven of powdered *Colchicum*. 26th. The fever no longer existed, and the

redness of the knee was nearly gone ; so that no medicine was ordered.

Mrs. H.—This case is so remarkable, that it must be given in detail. It was the first in which I had dared to trust to an increased dose of Colchicum, instead of bleeding copiously, as the symptoms seemed to demand.

Case of Pneumonia cured by Colchicum.

Mrs. H., a laundress, aged 30, took cold on October the 1st, 1820 ; and it would appear, from her account, that her symptoms were those of pneumonia. She, however, continued her usual avocations as far as she was able ; and although her appetite did not allow her to take much food, she drank her usual quantity of porter every day. On the 17th day of her disease, I was called in, and found her labouring for breath, suffering much from cough, and distressed by symptoms of violent fever ; her pulse was 120, and hard, and her skin was very hot. Five grains of Colchicum powder, and a drachm of sulphat of potash, were ordered to be taken every six hours.

18th day. The symptoms were very little altered, and the medicine was continued.

19th day. There was, if any thing, an aggravation of symptoms; indeed her state was such, as to have peremptorily demanded the use of the lancet, under ordinary circumstances; especially, as the bowels had been copiously acted on by the seven doses, which the patient had taken. However, a pill, containing three grains of powdered Colchicum, was ordered to be taken three hours after each dose of the powders; when, on the 20th day, she felt much more comfortable in all respects, and on the 21st, every symptom was materially relieved. Her pulse was 100, and small; her breathing was 30 in the minute, that is, 18 less than on the 19th; her skin was cool; she had slept all night; and she felt almost well. During the last two days, the bowels had been very frequently and severely acted on; and, therefore, as she had, in that time, taken six doses of the pills, and as many of the powders, she was directed to take only two doses of each, during the next twenty-four hours; and not that, if the purging continued. It was very satisfactory to see, how much the complexion, the colour of the lips, and the general appearance of the patient, as to health, had improved during the last two days; indeed, a

medical friend who saw her on that day, because the amendment had been so remarkable, would scarcely believe that she had been so ill; indeed, he found her in the street. Smaller doses of Colchicum were ordered, and on October 26th, she was really well; her pulse being 76, although she had walked quickly down stairs, and she said her strength would permit her to walk to Town with ease, if it were necessary.

The remark will be excused, that the quantity of strength remaining to the patient after the subsidence of this severe affection, was very different, from what it would have been, if the cure had been performed by bleeding.

October 18th.

Mrs. W., aged 35. *Case of Phthisis.* At least, this lady had been for some time under the care of a physician, and latterly of two, with the additional attendance of the writer, for an affection of the chest, which was considered by all to be confirmed consumption. She had constant cough, and pain in her side; her fever bore the hectic character; she had most profuse morning perspirations, and her pulse was 120.

Her symptoms had been similar to the above,

for some time ; but, as an aggravation of them had been present for some days, it was determined, in consultation, that she should take *Colchicum* : and, therefore, five grains of the powder were given every six hours, in a saline draught, the tender state of her bowels precluding the exhibition of sulphat of potash.

After taking two doses, she slept better than she had done since the aggravation of her symptoms, and she felt better during the next day ; but after the sixth dose was taken, she was much purged, and felt very languid and ill.

The further exhibition of the medicine was of course stopped ; but on the succeeding day, she was materially better in all respects ; except, that the *quickness*, not the hardness, of the pulse still continued. The skin was cooler, and the fever much moderated ; the pulse was softer, and, what was the most indicative of a favorable change, the patient's sensations were much more like those of health.

A further continuance of the medicine was agreed on ; but as the patient was going, the next day, to Devonshire, for the benefit of the climate during the winter, it was recommended, that she should take the medicine

only twice in the day; and as intelligible directions as possible were given to her in writing, for her guidance.

Her favorable symptoms continued until she went away; or rather, they still further improved; for, a short time before her departure, even under the circumstances of hurry, her pulse had fallen to 108; and her husband said, that it had been under 100, at an early hour of the morning. The opportunity of further superintending the treatment of this case would have been very desirable.

Miss M., aged 25. *Case of Hysteria.* This patient, whose complaints had followed anxiety of mind, had been previously relieved by full purging; but as the paroxysms of lowness and agitation of the limbs still continued, with a foul tongue, and a somewhat hot skin, five grains of the powder were given with sal polychrest, four times in the day, with the object of getting it's purgative effect, as well as of moderating the irritable state of the heart's action. After six doses were taken, both these effects were produced; but the complaint was not alleviated; camphor and ammonia were then given, and this, followed by

a daily alterative and warm purgative, now produced the best effects, and the patient was soon well.

Mrs. R., aged 35, was suffering much from *lowness of spirits*, attended by a foul tongue, a hot skin, and much derangement of the digestive organs. The usual dose was given, twice a day, for four days, and the patient was very much relieved; especially, as soon as the bowels were freely moved. She then took one dose daily, for a week, and was quite well.

October 19th.

Mr. B., aged 70. *Case of sub-acute Rheumatism connected with a disordered state of the heart.* The commencement of this gentleman's case was very interesting. He had been for many years subject to severe attacks of pneumonia; but during the year 1818, he was frequently plagued by diarrhœa, and he seemed to be breaking up in his health. In 1819, however, he greatly recovered; his complexion was restored, he gained flesh, and felt quite well. In the autumn of the same year, a palpitation of the heart came on, with pulsation in the head; so that his physician, making use of a strong expression to shew the urgency of the

symptoms, said he must be cupped instantly; hence, his pulse was then probably as hard and strong, as it was when the writer first saw him.

The patient then spent the Christmas holidays in the country, and was there bled, by means of leeches, for a similar affection. On coming to London, the writer saw him. At that time, his pulse intermitted; but it was peculiarly full, hard, and bounding, and the beating in the head was very distressing, especially in the night. Leeches, cupping, purging, and low diet, did not relieve this state, the pathology of which was not clear; when the pulse was found to be so strong one night, that a full bleeding was adopted. The present relief was perfect; but almost immediately on lying down in bed, half an hour afterwards, syncope of an alarming character occurred, and continued for some hours.

This gentleman was seen afterwards by three several physicians; cupping was repeatedly practised; the heart was considered to be deranged in structure, but it was not determined in what way; it was also suggested that an aneurism of the aorta might account for the beating in the head; but, after a long and minute

attention had been paid to remedying the deranged state of the liver and digestive organs, the complaint gradually subsided ; so that, the patient went to the sea-side in May 1820, and continuing there till the autumn, he returned with his health in a great degree re-established; the beating in the head having nearly subsided. May the writer be excused for suggesting, that this affection was, perhaps, an inflammation of the internal membrane of the heart and arteries?

Previous, however, to his present application, he had experienced a gradually increasing pain in his shoulders and elbows, and had now much pain and soreness of the wrists and fingers ; the joints of which latter were swelled. With these symptoms, the actions of the system were not materially different from what they are in a state of health.

A pill, containing 3 grains of powdered Colchicum, was given every six hours. On the next day, the patient was better, and the medicine was repeated ; but after taking six doses, it became necessary to relinquish the use of the medicine, on account of the sedative action it had on the heart.

The pulse, from having been somewhat

56 CASE OF HABITUAL ASTHMA, MUCH RELIEVED.

hard, had become quite soft, and it beat only 32 times in a minute. The patient was unwilling to leave off the medicine, because he felt no ill effects from the diminished action of his heart, whilst his pains and uncomfortable sensations were greatly diminished.

He was more troubled by the beating in his head, and the pain in his arm, in the course of the succeeding night; and as his pulse had again risen to its usual frequency, first, two, and then three pills were given in the 24 hours, with a sufficient dose of opening medicine in the morning.

On October 26th, he was much better, on the whole; but as he had still some pain at night, five grains of Dover's powder were given, and animal food was allowed. On October the 29th, he complained of being low and weak, which he thought was produced by the medicines acting two or three times on the bowels, every day. The opening draught was therefore omitted, and two ounces of decoction of bark were given twice a day.

Mr. A., aged 45. *Case of Aggravation of an habitual Asthmatic Cough.* His skin was

hot, and he felt a great constriction across his chest. After taking four doses, at intervals of six hours, he was violently purged and vomited; but on the next day, his chest, as he expressed it, seemed to be set at liberty, and the relief had continued up to October 28th, when he was last seen. He remarked, on the operation of the medicine, that he had never been so much relieved before by any other remedy.

October 20th.

Mr. F.'s child, aged 18 months. *Case of moderately severe Bronchitis.* Eight half-doses of the medicine, as usually prescribed, were given at intervals of six hours; and as there was great inflammation in the mouth, and swelling over one of the molares, the gum was freely lanced. Much relief followed this treatment; but it was discontinued, on account of the skin being quite cool; and rhubarb and magnesia, with a grain of Dover's powder, for the cough, were given three times in the day.

Mr. S.'s servant. *Case of Rheumatism.* This patient was the subject of the case, mentioned above, in page 24. She applied, on the pre-

sent occasion, on account of being somewhat feverish, and having pains similar to those which preceded her former illness. Nine doses of the medicine were given to her, with a direction to take one, three times a day. No report has been received of this case; but the writer is assured that she is well, or he should have heard from her.

October 21st.

Mrs. B.'s servant, aged 25. *Case of Quinsey.* She had been ill for three or four days; and now laboured under symptoms of considerable fever, with great difficulty of swallowing. Her tonsils were much enlarged, and were covered, in patches, by apparently a purulent secretion. She took eight doses of the Colchicum and sal polychrest; after which, purging was produced, and the inflammation of the tonsils, with the symptoms of general fever, had disappeared; but, as the glands continued to be enlarged and hard, an astringent gargle and small doses of opening medicine were ordered, and, in a few days, the patient was quite well.

Mr. B.'s servant, aged 16. This was a similar case to the last. The patient was going

CASES OF WHITLOW, OF SEVERE BRONCHITIS, AND OF 59
INFLAMED LEG, CURED.

into the country, and eight powders were given to him, with directions to take one, three times in the day : no report has been received of his progress.

Mr. G.'s servant. Four powders were here given, for *a whitlow* ; but as the abscess was freely opened, the writer does not lay much stress on them, as being the efficient means of relief.

October 22d.

Mrs. G., aged 60. *A case of severe Bronchial Inflammation.* The breathing was very difficult, and the lips and skin had a purplish hue. After taking four doses, in the common form, she was relieved ; but, as she was also much purged, a pill was given every four hours, consisting of three grains of the powder only. On the 6th day, she was nearly well ; but, as she felt low, and the signs of increased action had entirely disappeared, the Colchicum was discontinued, and rhubarb, with camphor and a little opium, was prescribed with success.

Miss G.'s servant, aged 60. This was a very satisfactory case of *great pain, swelling, and inflammation of the leg* ; produced by an ex-

cited and inflamed state of the constitution, acting on varicose veins of the leg. The patient's skin was very hot, and her pulse peculiarly hard. *Colchicum* was prescribed.

On the next day, her feelings were much more comfortable ; and on the 3d, all signs of inflammation had disappeared, and the swelling was gone.

A laced stocking was ordered ; and very little further care was required.

Mr. P., a baker, aged 30, applied for a *swelled face*, produced by the irritation of a portion of decayed tooth acting on the gum, in consequence of the habit being predisposed to fever. The piece was removed ; but his tongue was much furred ; and, in the evening, he had a severe attack of fever. Calomel and purging medicine were given ; but, as he was very little better on the succeeding day, the *Colchicum* was ordered. On the day but one after, he was met, wheeling his barrow along the street, and had discontinued his medicine after the fourth dose. He was quite well on the sixth day.

Miss R., aged 15, took four doses, in two

days, for a smart attack of *common fever*, from a cold, as she said; and with such perfect relief, that, she only took a small dose of opening medicine, daily, for three days afterwards.

October 24th.

Master. G., aged 8, applied with symptoms of *common fever*, similar to those of the last case. After taking seven three-grain doses, he was found to be exceedingly languid and weak, with his skin pale, and his spirits much depressed. The medicine had acted copiously on the bowels, but had not made him sick. His tongue was covered by a thickish grey slimy fur, as if from irritation; but his feverish symptoms were entirely gone. The mineral acids were given, and a more generous diet allowed, and on October 28, he had nearly regained his usual health. Two doses less of the medicine would have been better in this case.

October 25th.

Miss B., aged 14, resided at the same school with Miss R., and laboured under exactly the same symptoms of *common fever* as Miss R. did. She took six doses, and required no further medicine.

62 CASES OF BOILS AND TUBERCULAR ERUPTION, WITH
FEVER, CURED.

October 26th.

Miss A., aged 9, had been much troubled by *boils*, attended by some symptoms of *fever*. Four-grain doses were given twice a day; and, on the third day, it was found necessary to exhibit the medicine only once a day.

Master C., aged 6. *Case of tubercular eruption on the arms, attended by fever*. This little boy lay in bed, with a very hot skin and heavy eye, and the pupils much dilated; a large head, and a disposition to scratch the head; a lethargic kind of sleep constantly on him, and his arm covered by large, hard, raised, and red swellings of the skin, which were very tender to the touch. Four half-doses were followed, on the next day, by some purging, and an evident reduction of the inflammatory symptoms, as well as of the size of the pupils. He had slept also, more naturally; the soreness of the humours was much less, and the parents had lost their fear of impending hydrocephalus; of which disease they had had others of their children die.

The boy took four more powders, before the third day; when, the symptoms were nearly

gone. The medicine was now discontinued, on account of the languor which seemed to be on the eve of coming on. Fourth day; the patient was really well. Even the remains of the swelling were no longer to be seen, the boy was lively, and his tongue was quite clean.

Mrs. W., aged 55. Had formerly had a very large *ulcer of the leg*, which had left behind it a hardened, smooth, and tight band of skin, which surrounded the middle of the leg, putting on an appearance, as if the size of the leg had been diminished in that part, by the constant application of a roller.

A week before she applied, symptoms of fever had occurred, and the leg had swelled and become very painful; and, two days before, an ulcer had formed, and had continued to enlarge.

On examination, her state was as follows:—The leg was swelled, and very painful; the contracted band of skin, and a portion above, as well as below it, was of a purplish lead-colour; which dark coloured parts terminated in skin of a deep red-colour; patches and broad irregular lines of the same red-colour extending over other parts of the leg, and appear-

ing, as if they took the course of absorbents. In the centre of the dark coloured, contracted portion, a perfectly circular ulcer, as large as a crown-piece, was seen, and a smaller one appeared below. The colour of the granulations of both these ulcers, was of the same purplish tint. In short, the whole leg appeared, as if mortification would take place.

The patient's skin was very hot, and her pulse was exceedingly hard and strong; her tongue was dry and foul, and her general appearance that of one labouring under severe fever; indeed, she stated, that she had not slept for a night or two, on account of the painful state of the leg, and the symptoms of general fever.

The medicine was given six times, in the 24 hours; and, as she took two doses before going to bed, it was apparently sufficient to give her a tolerably good night; whilst, on the next day, after six doses had been taken, she felt quite easy, and, as she said, almost well, in comparison to her state on the preceding day; and this, although the medicine had not had any perceptible action; for the bowels had not been opened, and none of the other secretions had been increased.

Before taking the seventh dose, however, severe purging, for several hours, took place; and, on the third day, she said she was, as she really almost was, quite well; at least her leg had acquired its natural colour, and the swelling was so completely gone, that the patient refused, at first, to show her leg, because it would give her the trouble to take off the bandage which secured some wet cloths by which it was surrounded, and because, as she said, the ankle-bone could be felt through the stocking, as well as ever.

Of course the medicine was not continued, after the seventh dose.

It was curious to remark the altered appearance of the ulcers. The dark colour had almost entirely left them; and the granulations were gradually acquiring a rosy tint.

This patient's tongue, however, was not clean; therefore she was desired to take a little common opening medicine daily; and to be cautious in increasing the stimulating quality of her diet.

That this case may produce the proper effect, it may be stated, that, the patient's situation was such, as to have convicted the practitioner of deplorable ignorance, if he had not taken

away blood; unless, as in the present instance, he believed that he possessed a better remedy than the lancet.

The writer has only to add to this account of cases, that, in the period which he marked out above, his own three children, aged three years and a half, two years, and one year, were, in succession, treated by *Colchicum* for colds attended by the preliminary symptoms of severe tracheal or laryngeal inflammation. An emetic was premised, with great advantage, in each case, and two grains and a half of *Colchicum*, with half a drachm of sulphat of potash, were given four times a day for two days; when the medicine was no longer required, except that in the second child, it was unfortunately continued for three days, and therefore occasioned considerable languor and sickness, with a dirty greyish fur on the tongue.

In the youngest child's case, the *Colchicum* appeared to do for her what other modes of treatment had failed to perform.

When three months old, she took cold, by going out in the winter weather; and was affected by so severe an attack of *bronchitis*, that her life was only preserved, under the very skilful management of Dr. Armstrong and

Mr. Alcock, by bleeding, emetics, sinapisms, ipecacuanha in nauseating doses, the warm bath, and keeping her skin constantly covered by thick flannels, so as to prevent the possibility of the warmth of the surface being improperly dissipated.

The complaint did not entirely recede ; and, a chronic state of noisy breathing remained, with a convulsive cough, occurring in spasmodic paroxysms, which produced a suffusion of the countenance, and a distress which was often of a very alarming nature.

No plan of treatment relieved this state, as very little increased action of the system remained ; indeed, all modes of depletion, blisters not excepted, appeared to aggravate the complaint ; when, bark and hemlock were given, with very marked and permanent relief ; but, as the breathing was still so husky, that she could be heard across the room, and as the paroxysms of coughing occasionally happened, though in a less degree of violence, she was carried in June to the sea-side ; in the hope, that attention to her general health would save her from the gradual formation of a disorganized state of the lungs, or prevent a foundation being laid for future asthma.

Whilst at the sea-side, the child got into excellent health; and returned, at the end of a month, quite fat, and nearly free from her respiratory symptoms; but the latter soon returned in a rather more considerable degree, although her health did not decline.

These symptoms gradually got less, however; so that, by September, little or none of the rattling breathing or cough remained. They returned for a few days, on the child's cutting a tooth; but, about the 20th of October she caught cold; and, as another tooth was also pressing on the gum, all the symptoms returned with almost, apparently, their former violence. She was now treated by Colchicum, as above mentioned; and, on the third day, she had entirely lost all her complaints; so that she was quite as well as before the last attack.

After having thus given so many cases in detail; and indulged, for the sake of offering an unexceptionable account of my practice, in an account of so many, perhaps uninteresting cases, treated in succession by Colchicum, it would perhaps be more respectful to leave them for the consideration of the profession, without comment; but, whilst the last series of cases contains several of the most interesting

examples of the beneficial action of Colchicum, it may be remarked, that it shews the variety of cases to which the medicine is applicable, and something too, of the peculiarity of action of the tincture, which has led to the preference which is here given to the powder. The cases also illustrate, in some degree, the unfavorable operation of the medicine when it is pushed too far. But, as some observations will be made below, on each of these heads, except the first, it will be sufficient here to point to the case of sore nipples, as to one, which leads to a new hope of occasionally curing an untractable disease; to that of threatened consumption, and that of actual Phthisis, as being interesting in many points of view; to the two of inflamed leg, as fully illustrating the great powers of Colchicum, in remedying states of vehement local excitement; to that of tubercular cutaneous disease, as proving it's efficacy in the treatment of skin disorders, when joined with an excited state of the constitution; and lastly, particularly to the case of severe pneumonia, as a proof, that the Colchicum may be occasionally trusted to for the cure of such very violent states of inflammatory disease, as have hitherto been cured by the lancet, and perhaps by the lancet only.

It only remains now, before bringing this pamphlet to a close, to make a few observations on the writer's views in employing the *Colchicum autumnale* as a medicine, on it's mode of action, the precautions necessary for it's due exhibition, the proper mode of preparing the remedy, and on some other circumstances connected with it's employment as a medicine.

Accustomed, as the writer has long been, to consider the generality of complaints as the offspring of an undue excitement of the constitution, from irritations, applied either from without, through the medium of the atmosphere or other accidental agents, or from within, by local derangements of action or of structure, his employment of *Colchicum* has been, and is likely to be very extensive; for, as it has appeared to controul arterial action more certainly than any other individual agent except bleeding, and more safely than even the lancet, it generally forms a part of his early treatment of all diseases that are accompanied or caused by increased action of the heart and arteries.

It is necessary, however, to say, that, with all his confidence in it's powers, he has not,

hitherto, except in one case, trusted to it alone in very violent states of disease ; such as what is called idiopathic fever in it's worst forms, puerperal fever, when it threatens the immediate destruction of life, and such acute inflammations as we are accustomed to subdue only by the most copious depletion, &c. This has been so, 1st, because, consistently with his present experience, it is probable, that, even under the most skilful management and boldest mode of exhibition, it would not supersede the lancet in all such cases ; and 2dly, because, it is only a very extensive knowledge of any medicine, which will authorize a practitioner to employ it, in preference to old established modes of practice, in cases of great or immediate danger. But, from the successful result of the case above alluded to, (page 48,) we may hope that even in very many of these cases, further experience will show, that the Colchicum may be confided in, and that it will prove to be, in all, an eminent auxiliary to bleeding ; and that thus, by materially lessening the quantity of blood necessary to be drawn, it will be the means of saving many lives, which, under a more copious use of the lancet, would be lost ; as much

perhaps from the injurious effect of the remedy, as from the violence of the disease.

It is hoped that these anticipations will not be considered to be too strong; indeed, the writer feels that they are more than fully authorized, or rather, that they have been verified in his own practice; but he is anxious to state less rather than more, as what he thinks he knows on the subject, for fear it might lead such practitioners as have not been drilled to the use of Colchicum equally with himself, to trust to it in important diseases, before they have verified it's beneficial operation in less severe cases.

Hitherto, however, the remedy has been, on the whole, less successful in the writer's hands than those of his father. This has arisen, partly from his father having used it longer, and understanding it better; and partly, perhaps, because the writer's mode of exhibition has been, until lately, somewhat peculiar; inasmuch as he gave more opening medicine with it, and therefore trusted less to the specific operation of the Colchicum, and more to the common purgative, than his father has done.

The ordinary form of prescription is a powder, composed of one part of powdered

Colchicum, three of carbonate of potash, and five of sulphat of potash. Of this powder, one drachm is directed to be taken, three or four times a day, with half a pint of warm water, in the state of effervescence, with tartaric or citric acid. To this, is sometimes added a dose of calomel at night; and, where the bowels are not freely moved before the second or third day, and the disease is violent, salts and senna, to quicken it's operation; but in very violent cases more Colchicum is required, whilst no more purgative medicine can be borne; and then, as in the case detailed in page 48, pills of Colchicum only, are given between the doses of the powders. Or, in other cases of violence, pills of calomel, and of from five to eight or ten grains of Colchicum, are given in the first instance, to be followed by the powders, as directed above.

In cases where bleeding is considered to be advisable, it is made to precede the exhibition of the Colchicum.

It will usually happen that the medicine will produce some relief on the second day; but not it's decidedly beneficial operation till the third day, when purging generally takes place.

In some cases, indeed, no relief occurs, even on the third day, when full doses of opening

medicine are required, or it is necessary to increase the dose of Colchicum: but in others, the medicine purges on the second day, without producing a corresponding relief of the symptoms; or, the case is such, as to make much purging unadvisable: in these cases, a smaller quantity of the sal polychrest is given with the Colchicum, or the latter alone, without admixture.

In whichever of these ways the full operation of the medicine may be produced in the treatment of acute diseases, it is to be then discontinued; entirely, when the relief is perfect, or the actions of the constitution are subdued to the standard of health; or the medicine is given in less powerful doses, where any remains of excitement exist.

In chronic complaints, a small dose of calomel, or blue pill, and of aloes, with two or three grains of ipecacuanha, is usually given at bed-time, every night, and one or two of the drachm powders in the day.

In children and weakly subjects, the dose of the powder, in all cases, varies from sixteen grains to two scruples; so as to give from two to five or six grains of the Colchicum, the full drachm containing about seven grains.

It is necessary, however, to be cautious in taking these doses of the powder, as a general rule. As little even, as three grains every six hours, will be sufficient to overcome common feverish attacks, especially in persons of but moderate powers; at least, if the powder be good: but also, because Mr. Thomson has made it very probable, in a paper published in the London Medical and Physical Journal for October, and in the Medical Repository for the same month, that different specimens vary much in their strength, according as they are gathered at different times of the year, and are dried with more or less care.

Mr. Thomson thinks he has proved, that the bulb is in it's highest state of excellence in the month of July, or at the latest, early in August; and also, that drying the bulbs at a higher temperature than that of the atmosphere, materially tends to dissipate the apparently evanescent principle, on which their efficacy depends. Mr. Battley, however, has published an answer to Mr. T's. paper, in the Medical Repository for November; in which he advocates the advantage of drying the bulbs, after being sliced immediately on being ga-

thered, at a temperature of 170° of Fahrenheit.

Both these accounts cannot be right : indeed the subject is still entirely *sub judice* ; for some authors have said, that the bulb is most active when gathered in the spring, and even that it possesses no medical properties if permitted to grow till the Autumn. Under these circumstances, the writer has only to say, that neither his father nor himself has found the different specimens which they have used, to vary very materially from each other in practice, although they have been gathered both in Spring and in Autumn, or have been purchased from different druggists ; but then they have invariably powdered the dried bulbs at home, except in the case of the powder used at the Chelsea and Brompton Dispensary ; which, although it was procured at Apothecaries' Hall, was decidedly inferior, in point of efficacy, to the rest.

The writer has, however, still further to remark, that the powder he is at present using, is more powerful than he has before used, and that it was gathered in the meadows, near Derby, about the middle of September, when

the plants were in flower, and was dried at, at least, 130° of temperature, on the day it was gathered; having been first cut into thin slices and spread out on perforated trays. It was powdered on the day after; and the writer will be excused for taking this opportunity of thanking his friend Mr. J. H. Bainbrigge, House-surgeon to the Derbyshire General Hospital, for having been at much pains to supply both the writer and his father, as well as the Hospital, with a large quantity of dried bulbs and powder, prepared as above described.

The result of one of Mr. Bainbrigge's operations was, that from eight pounds of the fresh bulbs, 2lbs. 15oz. of dried slices were obtained; and from them 2lbs. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. of fine powder, with 4oz. of hard, brown, outside scales, which latter were very difficult to powder, and were not used.

The writer has but little to offer respecting the use of the tincture of Colchicum as a medicine, because he has not used it extensively; but that little is decidedly in opposition to it's being at all to be compared with the powder, as to it's utility. Indeed he scarcely recollects a case in which it did not produce unpleasant effects; and therefore, as these effects often

78 COMPARISON OF THE TINCTURE WITH THE POWDER.

happen before the disease is materially relieved, and as he can place such perfect reliance on the powder, he will continue to use and recommend it exclusively, until some more industrious observer shall show how the tincture may be used more advantageously.*

The experience of Dr. Williams, of Ipswich, of the efficacy of the tincture, made from the seeds, is much more satisfactory, and merits every attention. It is to be hoped that Dr. Williams will extend it's use to the treatment

** The following extract from a letter is gladly inserted here, as it bears directly on this point, and contains much useful information.*

“ November 3, 1820.

*“ Since I left London, I have had numerous opportunities of witnessing the *almost* specific powers of the Colchicum in gout and rheumatism, acute and chronic; and as you were, when I attended the Hospital, using it, it may not be uninteresting if I mention the mode in which I have found it produce it's beneficial effects. I give ʒij of the tincture, with thirty drops of laudanum, at bed-time, in a little cold water; and if the pain be very violent, or not much relieved, repeat the dose in the morning; but if it be abated, which it usually is, then nothing is required till night, when the same dose is taken. After the second dose, ʒi, with gr. v. of the pulvis cretæ comp. night and morning, finishes the cure. I find it necessary to give laudanum with the ʒij, or it would act very violently on the bowels; so much so, in some cases, as to preclude it's exhibition. The pulvis cretæ comp. is given with the same intention in the lesser dose, and is quite sufficient.”*

of acute as well as chronic diseases, and will favour the profession with the result of his investigations.

With regard to the powder producing, like the tincture, any unpleasant or dangerous effects on the constitution, this so seldom happens, that the writer's father says his horse's case was the first, in which any thing more than languor and sickness has been produced. The writer has, however, seen these symptoms go on almost to fainting; and, in one old man, who died of apoplexy, his jealousy of a new mode of cure made him somewhat apprehensive, that this languor might have added to his danger; but it did not appear to be so, to another practitioner who saw the patient. In one old lady, who was cured of pneumonia by Colchicum, and whose daughter, it was said, had died after taking an over dose of the tincture in gout, the appearance of the patient was very remarkable. She lay in bed, perfectly free from all inflammatory complaint, and, indeed, with every appearance of the *calmest* state of health; except, that her countenance was anxious, and her feelings were exceedingly uncomfortable to herself. She complained much of languor, of a sense of sick-

80 CASE OF GREAT EXHAUSTION, FROM AN OVER-
DOSE OF THE POWDER.

ness, and of a most debilitated state of the whole system. The whole had disappeared on the next day. This was by far the worst case of the kind that the writer has seen;* in several others, however, sickness and purging have

* He had hoped to have possessed himself of the particulars of a case of bronchitis, which occurred to one of his friends, a fortnight ago, and in which, the patient was brought into great hazard, by the violence of the purging produced by the powder. The patient, however, was a weakly female, who had been made to faint, from the loss of very small quantities of blood, three times, within the few preceding days, for a severe attack of bronchitis. It seems that she took five grains of the powder every four hours, with half a drachm of sal polychrest, for twelve times, when the purging became incessant, and the patient's slender powers were nearly exhausted.

The writer is sorry that he is not further acquainted with the particulars of the case; but he believes, that the quantity of sal polychrest was lessened after the first few doses, on account of the purging which was produced, and therefore, probably the use of the remedy was continued much longer than was proper.

In this case, the writer believes that the tongue became at last quite dry and dark coloured, as in typhus; but usually, where the Colchicum is pushed too far, the fur on the tongue is of a greyish colour, and lies on the part like a thick coat of slime.

Did the tendency which exists, for inflammation of the mucous membrane lining the bronchia to lapse into a similar inflammation of the mucous membrane lining the bowels, increase the irritation in the above case? at least, it should warn us to be more careful, not to push the remedy so far in mucous diseases, as in inflammations of a different order of parts.

warned him to omit the medicine; but then, the leading symptoms of the disease have been generally, by that time, removed; which cannot be said in all cases where sickness, &c. follows the use of the tincture.

Another point, also, in the management of *Colchicum*, requires attention. Just, as neither bleeding nor purging will remove inflammatory complaints, if attention be not paid to the diet, to the state of the skin, and to the usual collateral requisites of a successful medical treatment of disease; so, the same attention is necessary during the exhibition of *Colchicum*: and it is the more useful to press this point, because, it frequently happens, that, a good remedy is brought into disrepute by a supposed failure, when the failure has arisen from inattention to such collateral circumstances as are alluded to above.

The writer can offer but little information on the mode in which *Colchicum* acts. Indeed, we know but little of the mode of action of any medicine. *Rhubarb* purges, but we do not know why; *opium* lulls pain, but we deceive ourselves if we suppose any explanation is given of the fact, by saying, that it acts on the nervous system; because the question recurs, how does it act?

The sensible effects of Colchicum would appear to be, to controul the action of the heart and arteries, and, indeed, often to reduce that action below that of the standard of health. This effect is frequently produced long before it's other sensible effects are apparent: but when continued long enough, and generally before it's remedial virtues are decidedly obtained, purging takes place. Sickness and sometimes vomiting accompany the purging, in some instances; whilst, in others, the secretion from the kidneys, or from the skin, is increased, sometimes even without the former symptoms being perceived. In short, the custom of pharmaceutical nomenclature may perhaps authorize us in calling it a sedative; with this distinctive peculiarity, that it acts with energy in increasing the secretions, when given in sufficient quantities.

One subject still remains to be noticed, before concluding this essay. The Colchicum autumnale is a very powerful remedy, and is therefore either for good or for evil. It is not a medicine to be played with, nor a weapon to be wielded by unskilful hands, without danger. Like the lancet, if used improperly or pushed too far, it will bring with it regret and disappointment; but, like the lancet, it is hoped

COLCHICUM A VERY POWERFUL MEDICINE: CAUTION 83
REQUIRED.

it will amply repay him who uses it skilfully, and with due caution and moderation.

It may be said that, if we think about it, these observations are unnecessary; because they must apply to all remedies of great power: but they had better be repeated twenty times, than be forgotten once; and therefore the writer begs that his readers will take nothing that is here written, on trust; but that they will look on these observations as mere hints, which may guide them in their own cautious investigation of the subject, and then he ventures to say, that neither he nor they will be disappointed.

It is apparent, that this is a very imperfect account of the medicinal effects of the *Colchicum autumnale*. It fails in discriminating accurately, the forms of acute disease, in which the remedy acts most efficaciously; it does not point out those, in which it is useless; it refers almost entirely to the use of the remedy when given only in one state, and in one combination; and therefore the advantages, which may doubtless be derived in many forms of complaint, by giving it in conjunction with other kinds of medicine, are scarcely hinted at. But the writer proposed to give only the

results of his father's and his own experience, and he hopes, that enough has been said to show, that, with due care in the preparation and exhibition, the *Colchicum autumnale* is a most useful means of meeting increased action, and that it forms an important addition to the catalogue of our pharmaceutical remedies.

FINIS.



